

**From:** WEWoodsMPH@aol.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 24, 2006 9:10 AM  
**To:** Lao, Elena  
**Cc:** Kim, Gail T.  
**Subject:** Executive Matters Committee Testimony

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HONOLULU, HAWAII

Aloha City Clerk and Councilmembers:

Due to late notice of the hearing and prior commitments Please accept the testimony by Linda Wong as being my full sentiments and statements as my own.

Do good,

Bill Woods P.O. Box 37083  
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96837  
 808 537-2000

**STRONG NON SUPPORT FOR RESOLUTION 06-291 Relating to City Council Appointed Task Force charged to examine and report re the Neighborhood Board System including:**

- 1) Elimination of the NB system,**
- 4) Consolidation or reorganizing the number of board in the system, and**
- 6) Reviewing the meeting schedule of the boards to determine whether it should be changed to once every other month;**

**STRONG NON SUPPORT FOR RESOLUTION 06-291 - 1 pm,  
Aug. 24, 2006**

TO: Councilmember Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair, Executive Matters and Legal Affairs  
 Councilmember Ann Kobayashi,  
 Councilmember Charles Djou  
 Councilmember Rod Tam,  
 Councilmember Barbara Marshall,  
 Councilmember Todd Apo,  
 Councilmember Romy Cachola,  
 Councilmember Nestor Garcia,  
 Councilmember Gary Okino

**Misc. Com. No. 1331**

EM

8/24/2006

FROM: Linda Wong, Private Citizen  
DATE: August 23, 2006

RE: **STRONG NON SUPPORT FOR RESOLUTION 06-291** Relating to City Council Appointed Task Force charged to examine and report re the Neighborhood Board System.

Aloha Chair Donovan Dela Cruz and Councilmembers,

Since I have been elected to a seat in a Neighborhood Board for several years, have participated in numerous Neighborhood Commission Meetings, and had numerous dealings with the Neighborhood Commission Office, I feel qualified to speak on this subject.

I cannot support **RESOLUTION 06-291** Relating to City Council Appointed Private Task Force charged to examine and report re the Neighborhood Board System. I find that the operational difficulties **RESOLUTION 06-291** quotes and the City Auditor's findings are being cloaked with options to rid our citizenry of the Neighborhood Boards themselves. The Neighborhood Boards did not make the Organization Chart or political landscape that perpetuates the operational difficulties of the Neighborhood Commission Office and the Neighborhood Commission.

I have read the City Auditor's Audit of the Neighborhood System that the City Council voice fully asked the City Auditor to conduct August 31, 2005. Many Chairs of Neighborhood Boards testified in person on that day in favor of the Audit as they experience many problems with Neighborhood Commission Office and the Neighborhood Commission itself. The City Auditor listed numerous problems and oversights with the Neighborhood Commission Office and the Neighborhood Commission itself.

The City Auditor only listed some problems with some Neighborhood Boards of which this **RESOLUTION 06-291** seems to wrongly magnify.

In your **RESOLUTION 06-291** you quote "Whereas, some of the audit findings of the system's disjointed structure include..." there is no mention of our City Auditor's "Recommendations and Response"; ... "to consider separating the neighborhood commission and neighborhood commission office from the managing director's office and attaching them to another executive branch agency" to alleviate this problem.

Instead of following the City Auditor's recommendations that the City Council itself requested, the City Council's **RESOLUTION 06-291** calls for a **Private task force appointed by the City Council** charged with examining and reporting:

1) **Elimination of the NB system!** The City Auditor did NOT recommend this. This charge by the City Council is "throwing out the baby with the bathwater" and perpetuates

negative feelings between the Neighborhood Boards and the City Council.

2) **Increasing the power and authority of the system**; The City Auditor already recommended the separation of City Powers to accomplish this aim and end political maneuvering.

3) **Compensating Board members**; this was never mentioned and I imagine would only be accepted by those Board members that look upon their election as a "vocation" instead of an avocation.

4) **Consolidation or reorganizing the number of board in the system**; this was never mentioned anywhere in the Call for an Audit Reso 04-387 Relating to Audit of the NCO, or the Audit itself. Clearly this is an option put forth by the City Council. I remember the City Council proposing 21 seats instead of the current 9 on the City Council in another Reso.

5) **Reviewing the salary of the commission employees**; this was mentioned in related testimony re the Call for an Audit; Reso 04-387 Relating to Audit of the NCO. The past Executive Secretary made a decision that the NCO doesn't have enough monies/time to support the Neighborhood Boards with a Neighborhood Board Assistant to take the Neighborhood Board minutes longer than for a 2 hour meeting. These supposedly HGEA type positions are supposed to work 32 hours a week. They are being paid 32 hours a week and what are they doing correctly the other 30 hours? Certainly the NCO should take Neighborhood Board meeting minutes accurately and not lack information required by the sunshine law, take minutes past two hours once a month in their 128 hours monthly work when supporting the Neighborhood Board is foremost in their charge and assure compliance with the public notice requirements for board meeting minutes. This has led to Chairs cutting meetings short to save they kept 'their' meeting to 90 minutes. The public, city officials and Board members are hurried to a point of not being effective. Herein you will find only some Neighborhood Boards with not all Board seats filled, absentee rates and not able to meet quorum requirements.

6) **Reviewing the meeting schedule of the boards to determine whether it should be changed to once every other month**; this was never mentioned anywhere in the Call for an Audit Reso 04-387 Relating to Audit of the NCO, or the Audit itself. Clearly this is an option put forth by the City Council itself. How can dissolving NB meetings be thinkable if we cannot finish our Board meetings now within 1.5 - 2 hours?

Therefore I find I cannot support **RESOLUTION 06-291** Relating to a City Council Appointed

Private Task Force charged to examine and report re the Neighborhood Board System. I find that the operational difficulties RESOLUTION 06-291 quotes and the City Auditor's findings are being cloaked with options to rid our citizenry of the Neighborhood Boards themselves. The Neighborhood Boards did not make the Organization Chart or political landscape that perpetuates the operational difficulties of the Neighborhood Commission Office and the Neighborhood Commission. The Neighborhood Boards themselves have been duly elected to serve as the City Council has been. Let us complete our charge with

help from the City Council, not disbandment, non-support, and negative feelings.

Respectfully,

Linda Wong  
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Honolulu, HI 96815  
Ph. 923-7484

8/24/2006